

with a Grand Auditorium body style, the K14ce features Hawaiian koa back and sides combined with a Sitka spruce top that is torrefied (a roasting process to remove moisture that also darkens the top and ages the wood for tonal sweetness). Because this acoustic is a “Builder’s Edition,” it dials in exclusive appointments like a beveled armrest that alleviates stress points by putting your forearm in a more relaxed position for a comfortable playing experience. Adding to its thoughtful geometry, there’s also a sleekly contoured cutaway that weaves in a finger bevel, which allows the mahogany neck to flow seamlessly into the heel and soundboard, providing graceful access to upper-register notes on the fingerboard.

The K14ce displays an attractive Kona burst with a “silent” satin finish that curbs random noises when pressed against the body, a gorgeous koa/paua top and back trim and an intricately beautiful “Spring Vine” inlay on its West African ebony fingerboard. Other important features include a new black graphite nut, premium Gotoh 510 tuners and Taylor’s Expression System 2 electronics. To further ensure that this is a new beginning in the genesis of Taylor acoustics, a new guitar label was created with Powers’ signature inside the soundhole.

PERFORMANCE Words fail to capture the liveliness and nuanced feel of the Builder’s Edition K14ce because it is truly unlike any other acoustic I’ve come across, where individual notes sustain almost indefinitely and chords sound perfectly in tune irrespective of where I voice them. It’s really something to hear the exceptional balance playing the K14ce both loudly and softly, inasmuch as the acoustic consistently translates the relationship between each string in harmonious detail and immaculate intonation without choking any string’s specific frequency.

Besides the overall beauty of the guitar and player-friendly ergonomics, it projects a sweetened response and is deeply resonant, making every musical passage sound more robust. Taylor’s ES 2 electronics sound outstanding when playing live, but the acoustic absolutely sounds exquisite when it’s close miked. I believe Taylor’s Builder’s Edition K14ce—with its V-Class architecture—is an original and will be considered a milestone in the evolution of instruments that push the boundaries of musical expression.

CHEAT SHEET



STREET PRICE: \$4,999

MANUFACTURER:

Taylor Guitars, taylorguitars.com

- Taylor’s brand-new V-Class bracing drastically increases volume and sustain while improving intonation across the whole fingerboard, offering an enhanced playing experience.
- The V-Class bracing found in this K14ce model allows notes to be in pure alignment with each other, creating a uniformly harmonious and in-tune relationship when chording.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Taylor Builder’s Edition K14ce is in a class by itself, not only for its impeccable craftsmanship and out-of-this-world tone, but for its revolutionary V-Class bracing that will forever change the way you hear and play an acoustic.

Buzz Bin

MXR Sugar Drive



Let me get this out of the way—I love the name of this pedal. The MXR Sugar Drive? Are you kidding me? Yes, please! I’ll take two. Maybe three. Just like a spoonful of sugar in my coffee, I can’t get enough of its overdriven sweetness! But wait, I haven’t even told you whether this thing is good or not. Well, then, let’s get right to the point: The MXR Sugar Drive is pure confectionary hard rock and blues in a mini-chassis pedal. It can whip up a full-bodied clean boost to “amp in a box” granulated crunch so refined it might send you into a diabetic coma.

I’m well aware the Sugar Drive is somewhat of a “Klone” pedal derived from another legendary pedal that rhymes with “Tron.” But honestly, I don’t hear it. While the Sugar Drive possesses the same transparency, I find the pedal to have more in common with vintage JMP Marshalls in its natural overdriven breakup, not to mention a firm low end with cutting midrange. What makes the Sugar Drive fascinatingly unique is its voltage-doubler circuit found when you turn up the drive control, essentially giving you the high-ceiling headroom and dynamic response of an 18-volt pedal at 9-volt operation. Rolled counterclockwise, you begin with a stout clean tone, and as you increase drive, the circuit kicks in to blend organic overdrive that has a classic broken-in crunchiness that reminds me of vintage AC/DC. For those who need it, the pedal has a side-mounted toggle switch for buffered or true-bypass operation.

No doubt, the Sugar Drive is smooth in its overdriven and boosted tones, but what’s just as important is that it sounds fantastic when stacked or paired with just about any other overdrive or distortion pedal. Kind of like adding more sugar to your coffee.

—Paul Riario

STREET PRICE: \$119.99

MANUFACTURER: MXR, jimdunlop.com

